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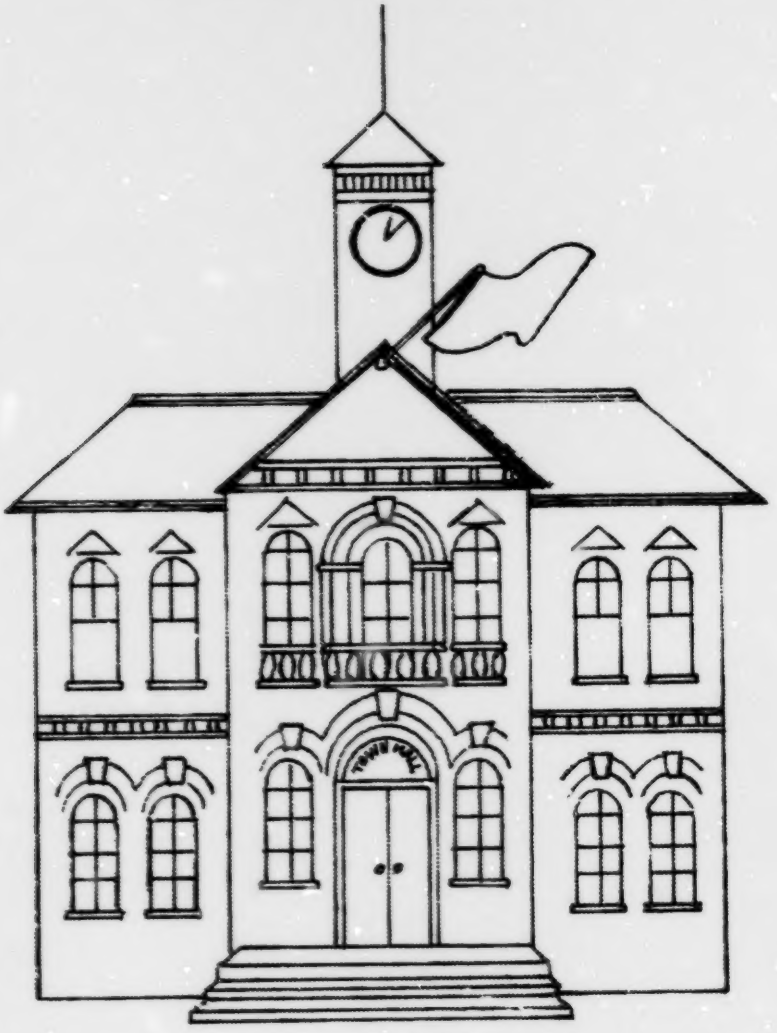
BULLETIN 52

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION



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Ministry of
Municipal Affairs
and Housing

Claude F. Bennett
Minister

Ward Cornell
Deputy Minister

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INTRODUCTION

In the speech from the Throne on March 20, 1983, the Government of Ontario made a commitment to encourage the introduction of Affirmative Action in the municipal sector. This bulletin is an outgrowth of that commitment and provides information to municipal officials about Affirmative Action. The bulletin is not prescriptive. Rather, its objectives are to identify what Affirmative Action is, explain why it is needed and to provide a model which shows how to implement an Affirmative Action Program.

WHAT IS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

Affirmative Action is a positive process to ensure women are included on an equal and competitive basis for all employment opportunities. It has a practical approach, aimed at the achievement of specific results, and it requires that schedules and goals be established and realized.

An Affirmative Action Program is the means to achieve the goal of equal opportunity. Such a program promotes the education, development and career advancement of women. It ensures that inappropriate employment qualifications are eliminated and that hiring and promotion is done strictly on the basis of merit. It is an effective management tool to help municipalities make the best use of all their human resources.

WHY ESTABLISH AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM?

More and more women are entering the labour force in Ontario each year; they make up 46% of the Ontario work force. Unfortunately, because of past incorrect assumptions about women's abilities and the type of work they should do, women tend to be concentrated in lower level jobs and in particular occupational areas. Affirmative Action is aimed at correcting the situation in a systematic and fair way.

Not only do women benefit from Affirmative Action but the organization itself will experience benefits such as reduced absenteeism and increased productivity achieved through higher

morale, better use of human resources and reduced training and recruiting costs.

As the trend of increased labour force participation by women continues, there is some urgency in developing Affirmative Action Programs in municipalities.

TIMING OF AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM

Timing is critical. Before an Affirmative Action Program can be implemented successfully in a municipality Council must be committed and the environment and the people in that environment must be prepared. Demographics of the organization must be researched to locate areas where women may be under-represented and employees must be educated on the intent of Affirmative Action. And, as some municipalities have found, information seminars on related legislation not only educate municipal managers but set the stage for the introduction of Affirmative Action Programs by identifying areas where changes may be desireable.

HOW IS AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED?

Depending on the size of the municipality various approaches can be used in setting up a program. However, in all municipalities a policy should be established by Council to demonstrate the municipality's commitment to Affirmative Action. Goals and objectives should be set each year to develop staff, including women. Most staff, not just women, benefit from setting these goals. Goals might relate to

areas such as working conditions and staff training opportunities, as well as hiring and promotion levels.

However, the success of Affirmative Action is highly dependent upon a formal plan of action with annual goals and objectives included in the corporate plan. In larger municipalities, the plan might be more complex; in smaller municipalities with few employees a more limited plan might be appropriate.

Several types of programs have been suggested. The Ontario Women's Directorate, which is responsible for enhancing equal opportunity for women in Ontario, suggests four general phases by which Affirmative Action can be accomplished. These phases are:

I. Organization

II. Strategic Plan

III. Implementation

IV. Review and Revise

PHASE I: ORGANIZATION

Data should be collected and analysed to pinpoint areas where female employees may be under-utilized or under-represented. All employees should be told the reasons for data collection, how the information will be used and the names of persons collecting data. They should also be assured that the information will be kept confidential. The type of internal data that should be gathered includes:

1. Internal Statistical Data by sex such as

   - o number of employees working in the municipality;
   - o job categories by departments;
   - o salary levels;
   - o length of time in current position;
   - o turnover patterns;
   - o job applic. .ts - current and historical;
   - o employees qualified to fill postions where women are under-represented;
   - o education and skill levels among employees;
   - o employees enrolled in training programs.

   Analysis of these statistics should reveal areas where women are over or under-represented or where barriers may exist.

2. Assess Municipal Policies . Procedures

   Municipal policies and procedures should be examined to determine areas where change may be needed (and, subsequently, to begin the planning function). Some policies may not be discriminatory in their wording but their implementation may benefit or disadvantage one group unintentionally. Particular emphasis should be placed on recruitment techniques, selection criteria, training and development programs, promotion and transfer policies and wage, salary and benefits.

o Recruitment techniques

Check to ensure that:

- job vacancies are posted for all positions;
- job advertisements specifically invite both men and women to apply;
- application forms are reviewed and revised for all employees;
- women are actively recruited for jobs at all levels;
- potential female recruits are informed of possible career opportunities in the municipality (e.g., advertise in media specifically aimed at women);
- recruiters are aware of and avoid practices which could discourage women (e.g., use of gender in job advertisements);
- sex bias does not exist in the tone, language or graphics of recruitment material;
- information about jobs is easily accessible to women;
- contact is maintained with educational institutions to more effectively recruit qualified women;
- written and oral recruitment practices are monitored for sex bias;
- interview boards include women members.

o Selection Criteria

Ensure that selection criteria are essential to perform the specific job. Review the following to ensure they are job-related and contain no sex bias:

- sources of potential employees, whether internal or external, formal or informal, (e.g., employment agencies, educational institutions);
- application forms and pre-employment inquiries (e.g. credit ratings, sex, marital and family status, physical requirements);
- job descriptions;
- tests;
- interview procedures;
- physical examinations;
- physical requirements (e.g. - height and weight may not be the right measure -- physical fitness or a certain level of strength may be the actual requirement in fire or police work);
- reference and security checks.

o Training and Development Programs

An analysis of training and development policies will determine if opportunities are made available to all employees. Review such items as:

- the process by which training programs are publicized to employees;
- eligibility requirements;
- nomination procedures;
- regularity with which female employees are interviewed to determine their training and development needs;

- the degree to which qualified women participate in management development initiatives such as job rotation, special assignments, task forces and committees;

o Promotion and Transfer

Determine the extent to which supervisors' recommendations are factors in transfers and promotions. (There may be unintentional discrimination, e.g., a supervisor may believe that women should not do physical labour.) At the same time, review all practices, formal and informal, affecting special assignments, transfer and promotion to ensure that:

- the same career paths are open to women and men;
- women are included in long-term human resource planning;
- systems are in place to ensure that qualified women can cross from one department to another or from one occupational area to another;
- performance appraisals are not sex biased;
- the same type of performance appraisal is used at all levels.

o Wage, Salary and Benefits

A review of wage, salary and benefits practices is necessary to ensure compliance with employment standards legislation such as equal pay, pensions and pregnancy leave. As well, review job classifications with low wage rates and with a high percentage of female employees. The methods of job classification should be reviewed for

unintentional bias (e.g., where the emphasis may be on physical strength rather than skill required).

PHASE II: STRATEGIC PLAN

Once a municipality has analyzed its data and assessed its policies, it can move into the planning stage of Affirmative Action. The purpose of this phase is to set objectives and targets for the organization which are measurable and achieveable.

1. Set Objectives

Goals will require both short and long-range time-tables, and should be set initially with a view to integrating Affirmative Action procedures throughout the municipality. Goals and timetables should be set in each of the areas of: reviewing policies and procedures; accumulating internal data; and, providing awareness programs.

o Reviewing Policies and Procedures

Goals and timetables should be set to review:

- recruitment techniques;
- selection criteria;
- training and development programs;
- promotion and transfer procedures;
- wage, salary, benefit and classification structures;
- internal communications.

o Accumulating Internal Data

Goals and timetables should be set to review and analyse data, by sex, in the areas of:

- number of employees within each employee group;
- salary information within each employee group;
- number of employees with the required qualifications for promotion;
- number of applicants for job openings (e.g., applied, interviewed and hired);
- other data gathered in Phase I.

o Awareness Programs

Goals and objectives should be set to establish:

- awareness programs for chief administrative officers, clerks, treasurers, department heads and other administrative staff;
- awareness programs for all employees;
- public education awareness programs for the community at large and potential employees.

2. Determine Strategies

Where analysis of Phase I data suggests that personnel practices and policies could be improved to enhance equal employment, specific corrective measures should be taken. The following are some strategies which have been found useful in successful Affirmative Action Programs:

o Policy Statement

- Issue a policy statement from the municipal council to all employees confirming the organization's commitment to Affirmative Action;
- Send a directive to all line managers requiring accountability for achievement of Affirmative Action targets.

o Executive Involvement

- Obtain top management commitment, the key to success in any Affirmative Action endeavour;
- Make results of Affirmative Action an area of job responsibility in management appraisal;
- Schedule workshops for administrators to explore attitudes and practices that commonly discriminate against women and to convey data from Phase I;
- Revise communications to eliminate sex bias from municipal documents including advertisments, recruitment materials, memos, forms, directories and manuals.

o Job Restructing

- Redefine and re-orient jobs based on current organization and individual needs instead of outdated job specifications;
- Consider job enrichment, job enlargement, job sharing and career development in the structuring of jobs.

o Identification and Tracking of Promotable Women

- Identify promotable women and set up a system to monitor their progress;
- Encourage women to enrol in training programs;
- Provide intensive training for women with high potential;
- Provide individual career counselling and prepare development plans.

o Complaint Procedure

- Establish an in-house process to review complaints relating to sex bias.

PHASE III: IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation phase of an Affirmative Action Program is the longest and most difficult, but the most rewarding. Implementation transforms into reality those goals which were set during the planning process. Once the program is implemented, it will be important to maintain the following procedures:

- o Communicate the municipality's commitment to employees on a regular basis;
- o Provide continuous support and advice to employees as they will all be affected by the program;
- o Integrate the program by building it into the municipality's accountability and reporting procedures.

PHASE IV: REVIEW AND REVISE

An effective Affirmative Action Program must maintain flexibility to allow adjustment as necessary. Therefore, it is important that a process be developed to maintain, update and review data collected in Phase I. This will assist with achievement and redefinition of goals.

The progress towards goal achievement should be reviewed on a regular basis. Some methods of reviewing include:

- o Personal interviews with employees most affected by the program;
- o Commitment reviews with senior management and line managers;
- o Summaries of estimated versus actual goal achievement.

Review and revision of the Affirmative Action Program should also be built into the reporting structure. The member of staff who has responsibility for the program should report to council regularly on the attainment of affirmative action goals.

FINALLY ...

Municipalities should familiarize themselves with Affirmative Action principles and with legislation such as the Human Rights Code, the Employment Standards Act and the Charter of Rights. In addition, the publication A Workshop on Equal Opportunity in Employment is a valuable management tool. The principles enunciated in the workbook apply to all areas covered by the Ontario Human Rights Code, 1981. This information is available from the following:

1.	A Workshop on Equal Opportunity in Employment	Race Relations Division Ministry of Labour 11th Floor, 400 University Ave. Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7 Telephone: (416) 965-1613
2.	Human Rights Code:	Ministry of Labour Ontario Human Rights Commission 12th Floor, 400 University Ave. Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7 Telephone: (416) 965-6841
3.	Employment Standards Act Guide	Ministry of Labour Employment Standards Branch 3rd Floor, 400 University Ave. Toronto, Ontario M7A 1V2 Telephone: (416) 965-5152
4.	Charter of Rights	Publications Canada Box 1986, Station B Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6G6

More . . . . .

The Ontario Woman's Directorate, through its Consultative Services Branch, provides advice, assistance and consulting services to organizations in the public and private sectors on Affirmative Action. For further information contact:

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